

Politically Correct Evangelism

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Acts / Evangelism; Contextualization / Acts 17

While in Athens Paul tried to philosophise with the philosophers but won very few people to Christ. Afterwards, Paul went to Corinth where he decided to change his tactics. He focused on the cross, even though it was hard to accept. What can we learn about different approaches to evangelism through Paul's ministry?

On the campuses of many of the nation's most prestigious colleges and universities, there is a new emphasis on the use of "politically correct language." Faculty, administration and student officials are insisting that persons on their campuses not be guilty of any of a variety of verbal or attitudinal sins, including:

- Heterosexism — expressing and/or believing that a homosexual lifestyle is not a completely legitimate and appropriate choice.
- Ableism — any bias against the "differently abled" (formerly identified as handicapped or disabled, but use of either term today is a blatant example of ableism). Including stairs in a building is an example of ableist architecture.
- Ageism — prejudice against the aged by the temporarily non-aged.
- Specieism — the attitude that your species (i.e., humans) is in some way more valuable than any other species (i.e., cockroaches). Thus, placement of a roach motel in your home would be a violent implementation of your specieism.
- Lookism — the attitude that some people are better looking than others.
- Sizeism — bias against the differently sized. For example, those frequent articles on dieting are vicious illustrations of sizeism at work.
- Laughism — "inappropriately directed laughter" is now on the list of "isms" banned at the University of Connecticut (U.S. News & World Report, March 4, 1991).

Assuming that movements that take place on our college campuses are simply the vanguard of broader societal movements to come, it seems inevitable that such emphases will soon make their way into the pulpits of America. So that you can be on the lookout for such attitudinal irregularities, feel free to post the following checklist on your church bulletin board.

Acts 17:1 ESV

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

Map

Turkey

Greece

Same Old Same Old

Acts 17:2-10 ESV

And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of

Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.

- Same Old
 - Paul Goes to Synagogue
 - Teaches about Jesus
 - Many Accept
 - Jews Get angry
 - They start riot
 - Paul Flees to new area
- Satan has a strategy.
- Jason is arrested and
 - money taken as collateral
 - Why?
 - He housed this preacher!!!

In 1978, Thomas Hansen of Boulder Colorado, sued his parents for \$350,000 on grounds of "malpractice of parenting." His lawsuit claimed that Mom and Dad had botched his upbringing so badly, that he would need years of costly psychiatric treatment.

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Acts 17:11-14 ESV

Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds. Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there.

- Same Old
 - Paul teachings
 - Showing Jesus as Messiah
 - Many believe
 - Jews Come
 - Create Mob
 - Paul Flees

- Satan figured it out...
- Paul keeps preaching
 - knowing life in danger!
- Living on the edge?

A group of believers was meeting in an Iron Curtain country when the church door burst open and two Russian soldiers with submachine guns strode in. They said they would give five minutes for anyone who wished to renounce Christ to leave, and that those who stayed would be shot immediately.

As each person searched his heart for the courage to face death, a few got up and left. The officers then walked to the door of the church, locked it, and turned to the congregation with the words, “Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are believers, too, but we did not want to worship where everyone was not completely committed to Christ and willing to die for Him. May we become part of your fellowship?”

- Who would be left
 - if this happened
 - here, today?
- That is similar

- to Paul's mission work.
- Paul run out
 - town after town
 - try different approach.

Philosophy

Acts 17:16–19 ESV

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbling wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?"

- Mars Hill
 - Outdoor Amphitheater
 - Council Give Decisions
 - Philosophers would share ideas

Acts 17:20–21 ESV

For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

- They loved philosophy
 - share ideas
- Paul’s Philosophical Approach
 - Match Philosophy
 - with Philosophy

Biblical Philosophy

Acts 17:22–31 ESV

So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to

live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for

“ ‘In him we live and move and have our being’;

as even some of your own poets have said,

“ ‘For we are indeed his offspring.’

Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

- Long sermon
 - some listening
 - connecting with them...

Contextualization

- Teaches the idea
 - give the gospel

- in word that
 - they can understand.

1 Corinthians 9:19–23 ESV

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

- Contextualization
 - Pros and Cons
- **Pros**
 - Quicker connections
 - Greater Numbers
- **Cons (Danger)**
 - Danger of cheapening
 - the gospel

- in the process.
- Contextualization Today
 - cheapening gospel
 - to a hashtag

#CrossofChrist

- Paul becomes
 - a philosopher
 - for the philosophers
- But I ask
 - what was final outcome?
- They liked his sermon
 - until until resurrection....

Acts 17:32-34 ESV

Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others

said, “We will hear you again about this.” So Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

- They could not accept
 - teaching of resurrection...

- Different Outcome
 - no mob...
 - no fleeing...
 - little fruit...

- Some believed
 - foundation of new church.

- Paul goes to Corinth next
 - next sermon

- In Corinth
 - Paul changes approach...

1 Corinthians 2:1-2 ESV

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

- Focus?
 - Cross
 - Difficult to accept
 - Why?

1 Corinthians 1:23 ESV

but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,

- Jews
 - Reject Jesus as Messiah
 - Want a King
 - Not a Cross
- Gentiles
 - Foolish

- God on Cross?
 - Died for Us?
 - Resurrection?
-
- Hard sale
 - focus anyway why?
 - leads to true conversion!

Cheap Grace

According to Bonhoeffer,

“Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline. Communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”

"Of course you have sinned, but now everything is forgiven, so you can stay as you are and enjoy the consolations of forgiveness."

Costly Grace

“Costly grace confronts us as a gracious call to follow Jesus, it comes as a word of forgiveness to the broken spirit and the contrite heart. It is costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him; it is grace

because Jesus says: 'My yoke is easy and my burden is light.'"

Bonhoeffer argues that as Christianity s

Politically Correct

- Why did Paul
 - teach so different
 - Athens -> Corinth?
- Because People different?
 - Maybe...

More Likely...

- Because he saw
 - results?
- Paul didn't
 - completely use

› Contextualization

- People of Corinth

- similar to Athens
 - yet very different approach

› Political Correctness

- Didn't give
 - gospel that was
 - easy
 - convenient
 - superficial
 - comfortable

› Apologetics

- Didn't argue
 - Defend
 - Prove
- Corinth
 - stayed 1.5 years
 - Model

- Love
 - Sacrifice
 - Care...
-
- No Apologetics...
 - Just

The Cross

- Focus of Witness
 - Cross
 - Call to Sacrifice

› Illustrations

Appeal

- Preach